Sandigan rules Imelda jewelry collection as ill-gotten

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The Sandiganbayan Special Division ordered one of the three famous jewelry collections of former first lady and now Rep. Imelda Marcos of Ilocos Norte forfeited in favor of the government

The anti-graft court's Special Division in a 33-page decision ruled that the Malacañang jewelry collection must be returned to the government after evidence supported that it is ill-gotten.

The Malacañang collection, worth between $110,055 and $153,089 and presumably the least and smallest of the three collections, was confiscated by the Philippine government in 1986 along with Hawaii collection and the Roumeliotes collection.

In the ponencia of Associate Justice Efren de la Cruz, the court held that the collection is an "ill-gotten wealth."

“Partial summary judgment is hereby rendered declaring the pieces of jewelry, known as the Malacañang Collection, as ill-gotten, and are hereby forfeited in favor of petitioner Republic of the Philippines,” read the Sandiganbayan decision with Associate Justices Teresita Diaz-Baldos and Alex Quiroz concurring.

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The case stemmed from the civil lawsuit that the Presidential Commission on Good Government as Civil Case 0141 in 1987.

The Office of the Solicitor General filed the petition on December 17, 1991 as part of Civil Case 0141.

However, the Marcoses blocked state efforts, saying that the Malacañang collection is not part of the civil case which included Aguamina, Avertina, Palmy, Vibur and Maler, or collectively known as the Arelma asset.

The Marcoses pointed out that the asset in connection with Civil Case No. 0141 is outside the jurisdiction of the anti-graft court since only the $356 million-worth escrow deposit from the Swiss foundations and some $30 million worth of Treasury notes in the custody of Central Bank are included.

In its ruling, however, the Sandiganbayan sided with state lawyers, saying that the collection was part of the government claim in Civil Case 0141.

In its April 2009 decision, the Sandiganbayan declared that the Arelma assets were “manifestly out of proportion to the combined salaries of the Marcos couple.”

The Supreme Court likewise ruled the same, saying that the three collections must be reinstated back to the government because the sum of the Marcos assets previously forfeited by the Supreme Court breached over their lawful income of $304,372.43.

The PCGG ensured that the Malacañang collection, alongside two other collections, is safeguarded in the vaults of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

From its name, the Malacañang collection is comprised of smaller and less expensive articles that the family left behind the presidential palace at the height of the February 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution. **JOHN CONSTANTINE G. CORDON**